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The Federal Investment in Bilingual Education.

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In this speech Congressman Pucinski reviews the outlook for bilingual education in the United States. He reminds us that the gains that have been made in the past two or three years "are impressive in their intent," but that we must renew our dedication to this ideal or lose "the initial momentum which has been so long in the making." Although there were programs for non-English speakers underway in several states, and although Federal committees were working at the national level to study bilingual problems, the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 was a milestone of progress toward bilingual-bicultural education. Wide bipartisan support was given the bill and 310 preliminary applications for aid were filed under its provisions, proving that bilingual education was an idea whose time had come. The fiscal realities of the year 1969 were to prove disappointing, however. Although $30 million was authorized for 1969, only $7.5 million was finally available. "The need has been recognized but the legislation has yet to be translated into a real fiscal commitment." We must therefore concentrate our efforts and resources on three major problems: changing state laws forbidding instruction in languages other than English, developing suitable bilingual materials, and, most importantly, preparing teachers to participate in bilingual programs. The public should support Congressional action to fund such projects. (JD)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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THE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Ladies and gentlemen, the concern which brings us together here today is of such great importance to the future wellbeing of the Nation and her children, that I will waste little time on preliminaries. I only wish to thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Federal Government's investment in bilingual education.

I know that this topic is one in which we share a common interest. Congressmen and educators worked together for the enactment of the Bilingual Education Act in 1967, and we must continue to coordinate our efforts in order to insure that this legislation is both fully funded and effectively implemented.

Within the last two or three years, what was once called the "invisible minority" has attracted considerable attention at the national level. The problems of the Nation's Mexican-American population have been officially recognized: new committees have been formed; Congressional hearings held; legislation enacted, and so forth. In all of these activities -- whether they relate to employment, housing or education -- there runs a common thread. Limited English-speaking ability constitutes one of the major barriers to acceptance, opportunity and equality for many Americans in the United States today. Recognition of the existence and pervasive influence

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of this language barrier has served to highlight the plight of an estimated 3 to 5 million American schoolchildren who do not speak English as their native language.

While I welcome the dawn of this new found awareness, I would also point out that we must beware of the complacency which sometimes follows a period of rapid progress. The gains which have been made are impressive in their intent, but they have yet to be consolidated. The Bilingual Education Act, for example, is an impressive legislative accomplishment, but as yet no projects have been funded under its authority. The very existence of a number of measures designed to aid the Mexican-American and other linguistic minorities is a heartening sign. But the progress made seems great only when viewed against a backdrop of many years of neglect.

The need for continuing attention to the needs of those Americans who are linguistically and consequently economically disadvantaged, is even greater now that the first steps have been taken on their behalf. Without such renewed dedication, we risk the loss of that initial momentum which has been so long in the making.

Signs of the new commitment to linguistic minorities may be seen at all levels of government. Public schools such as the Coral Way Elementary School in Miami, Florida and others throughout the country have helped to pave the way by establishing bilingual education programs on their own initiative. Here in Chicago, experiments in bilingual education have long

been underway in both the private and public schools. Under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, funds were being used to establish bilingual education projects in several Southwestern States prior to enactment of the Bilingual Education Act. New York City recently instituted bilingual report cards for students from Spanish-speaking communities in an effort to foster better understanding between the childrens' parents and the schools.

At the State level, California passed a law in 1967 permitting instruction in languages other than English in the early grades. Both State and Federal funds are being directed toward the improvement of migrant education in many rural areas. Since 1963, for instance, Texas has provided an intensive six-month program for the children of migratory workers who leave the area early in the spring and do not return until late fall.

In 1967 two new committees were established at the National level to give increased aid and visibility to the problems of Mexican-Americans: The Interagency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs was created by the President both to assure that Federal programs are reaching and assisting Mexican-Americans and to seek out new programs to meet the unique and unmet needs of the Mexican-American community. In its first year of operation this Committee held intensive hearings in El Paso, Texas on all aspects of Mexican-American development. On the basis of the recommendations and information which were presented at that time, the Committee has worked to intensify the focus of many Federal programs on the specific needs of the

Mexican-American population. A bill (S.740) was introduced in the Senate just last month to establish the Interagency Committee as a statutory agency with expanded functions and responsibilities.

In the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, a special advisory committee was sworn in in 1967 to consider the special needs of bilingual and bicultural Mexican-American families. A Mexican-American Affairs unit has been established as a permanent part of the Office of Education to insure that the educational needs of this minority group are receiving their full share of attention. In 1968 the creation of a new unit in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare was announced. Known as the Office of Spanish Surnamed Americans, it will serve as a clearinghouse for programs and services available to the Nation's Spanish-speaking community. As well as advising the Secretary of HEW on all matters affecting those with Spanish surnames, the Office will also act as liaison to the U.S. Interagency Committee on Mexican-American Affairs and the U.S.-Mexico Commission for Border Development and Friendship.

This brief summary of recent developments in what has become known as La Causa would be sadly incomplete without a full discussion of the Bilingual Education Act of 1967. To my way of thinking, this piece of legislation is a milestone in America's fight for equal opportunity for all her citizens. I have already mentioned the language barrier as one of the roots of that economic hardship which afflicts so many non-English speaking Americans. The only sure way to attack this problem at its core is through a major

revamping of the education they receive.

The statistics are probably already known to many of you here today. In four of the five Southwestern States over 80% of the Spanish surname population age 14 and over has not completed high school. In many schools with predominantly Mexican-American student bodies, the dropout rate exceeds 50 percent. Prior to enactment of the Bilingual Education Act, only $30 million was provided under all Office of Education programs in 1967 for projects designed to meet the needs of non-English speaking persons. This is less than one percent of the total Office of Education budget which exceeded $3.4 billion. In the face of facts such as these, there can be little doubt that legislative action was long overdue. Bilingual education joined the ranks of those ideas whose time has finally come.

In the first session of the 90th Congress, 37 individual bills were introduced in the House of Representatives to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to authorize bilingual and bicultural education programs. The General Subcommittee on Education of which I am Chairman held public hearings in June of 1967. At that time we heard witnesses from throughout the country testify to the hazards which face youngsters from non-English-speaking communities. I stated then my belief that "the benefits of bilingual instruction will multiply greatly with each new generation. The need to begin the program is obvious. The benefits to individual communities and to the country should more than justify the investment." That many members of Congress shared with me in this belief soon

became obvious. Bilingual education won wide bipartisan support in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. It was incorporated into the 1967 Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as Title VII, otherwise known as the Bilingual Education Act.

Before examining the future prospects of bilingual education, let me briefly summarize the provisions of this legislation for you. As stated in the Office of Education Guidelines, the program "is designed to meet the special educational needs of children 3 to 18 years of age who have limited English-speaking ability and who come from environments where the dominant language is other than English. The concern is for children in this target group to develop greater competence in English, to become more proficient in the use of two languages, and to profit from increased educational opportunity." Bilingual education is defined as "instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part of or all of the school curriculum. Study of the history and culture associated with a student's mother tongue is considered an integral part of bilingual education." The Office of Education stresses that although the Title VII program affirms the primary importance of English, it also recognizes that a child's mother tongue, when used as the medium of instruction before his command of English is sufficient to carry the full load of his education, can help to prevent retarded performance in school.

Many different kinds of projects will be eligible for funding under the Bilingual Education Act. Program planning, research and pilot projects, and

the development and dissemination of special instructional materials may be funded. Preservice and in-service training for teachers, teacher aides, counselors and others will be included. Other suggested activities are related to the establishment and operation of bilingual programs. These activities might include courses in the history and culture associated with the students' languages, efforts to improve school-community relations, early childhood and adult education programs, bilingual education for part-time pupils, dropouts and potential dropouts, and bilingual courses conducted by trade, vocational or technical schools.

There are two types of eligible applicants for funds under Title VII: (1) a local educational agency or combination of such agencies; and (2) an institution of higher education applying jointly with one or more local educational agencies. To qualify for assistance, a school must enroll a high concentration of children of limited English-speaking ability from low-income families. Highest priority will be given to those geographical areas of greatest need.

Preliminary proposals are sent to both the State Education Agency and the U.S. Office of Education. The first deadline for submission of these proposals was December 20th of last year. If all goes according to plan, the first grants under the Bilingual Education Act will be issued by June 30 of this year.

According to the Office of Education, 310 preliminary applications were received before the cutoff date. These applications represent a total request

of $40.4 million dollars. The sheer number of applications received serve as an indicator of the interest which has been generated by the Bilingual Education Act. The fiscal realities of the year 1969, however, bring us face to face with some rather sobering facts.

An appropriation of $15 million was authorized for bilingual education in fiscal 1968, $30 million for fiscal 1969, and $40 million for fiscal 1970. Funds for 1968 were not appropriated, but expectations for 1969 still ran high. Keeping in mind the amount which was authorized - $30 million - you can well imagine the disappointment which met the President's 1969 budget request of only $5 million. Our dismay was even greater when the House of Representatives then failed to appropriate any money at all to bilingual education. The Senate Committee on Appropriations recommended a sum of $10 million which was ultimately whittled down to a final figure of $7.5 million. $7.5 million available and $40.4 million applied for. Inevitably many worthwhile projects will go by the boards for lack of funds.

Our efforts in the 91st Congress, however, will be directed toward this very problem. Already several Congressmen have introduced legislation to provide supplemental appropriations for this fiscal year and to assure that the program will be fully funded in fiscal 1970. I am certain that measures such as these will command the support of many of my fellow Representatives. There are indications that even the most conservative members of Congress are deeply concerned about the success of this program.

Additional funding can be more than amply justified by a look at Office

of Education estimates of funding allocations at various appropriation levels. Full funding in 1969 could provide services for approximately 214,600 pupils as compared to the 50,000 who could be served with the funds which are presently available. An appropriation of $30 million dollars would provide, among other things, $1,100,000 for research, $2,700,000 for teaching materials, and $1,600,000 for planning, orientation and dissemination. It would also support short-term institutes for 2,100 teachers and academic year programs for 600 teachers. I can assure you that, given the present appropriations, accomplishments under the Bilingual Education Act cannot begin to approach this level of comprehensiveness. The need has been recognized, but the legislation has yet to be translated into a real fiscal commitment at the National level.

We are all aware of the financial straits and strains which have beset our country in these troubled times. It may be well, therefore, to consider the question of priorities in bilingual education. In other words, if the ideal is unattainable at the present time, where should we focus our efforts in order to accomplish the most good?

According to an article by Armando Rodriguez, Chief of the Mexican-American Affairs Unit of the U.S. Office of Education, there are three major problems hampering the rapid development of bilingual education in our schools.

The first problem is a legal one. In most States there are laws forbidding instruction in languages other than English. Mr. Rodriguez mentions the need to legally encourage bilingual instruction at the State level. I

would suggest that you, as educators, can be particularly effective in the campaign to abolish these long outdated laws from the books. Their very existence is alien to the respect for diversity which is an integral part of this Nation of immigrants.

The second problem Mr. Rodriguez mentions is the lack of suitable bilingual materials. Only a few such materials have been developed, but even they are in greater supply than our third problem. And that is the lack of teachers prepared to participate in bilingual programs. Mr. Rodriguez estimates that by 1970 we will need 100,000 bilingual teachers if we are to "start the United States on a road toward becoming a bilingual-bicultural nation." Recruitment on this scale must obviously involve the retraining of many teachers already in the schools, but it must also draw upon the vast, and untapped resources of those young Americans who speak English as a second language. The recruitment and training of youths from minority groups would be of great benefit both to the children, the community, and the prospective teacher himself.

The most urgent problem which faces the Nation today is the breakdown in communication between the many different minority groups, age groups, and interest groups, which together comprise the very fabric of our society. Competent bilingual teachers who do not speak English as their native language can help to build the bridges which are needed between school and community, just as bilingual education itself can help to restore the linguistically disadvantaged American to his rightful place in our society.

I have mentioned the efforts which I intend to make on behalf of bilingual education in the 91st session of Congress, but I also wish to emphasize the role which public opinion plays in the setting of national priorities. As educators you can be instrumental in creating a climate of opinion in your States and local communities which actively supports our attempts in the Congress to insure that no man is excluded from an excellent education because of his cultural heritage.

Diversity has traditionally been one of our Nation's great strengths. The interplay of cultures has provided a constant source of those new ideas which are necessary for continuing progress and the renewal of our national energies. Bilingual education is an affirmation of the value of this heritage from the past; it is also a promise to the future -- a future in which all Americans may share in the creation of a society in which diversity is no longer a hindrance but rather an asset.